

# SCHOOL TOOLS

OCTOBER 2020



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## LEARNING DURING COVID-19

October has officially begun, with the 2020-2021 school year well underway. Many of you may agree that this year's start to the school year looks much different than in years past. Whether your student is attending school virtually, in-person, or in a blended format, you and your child may be experiencing new stressors at home and school.

As caregivers, you may be struggling yourself with health concerns, job losses, lack of childcare, homeschooling, social isolation, and more. On top of this, you are working overtime to maintain your child's mental and physical health as well. You may have rising concerns about changes in your child since March, such as heightened anxiety, an increase in impulsive behavior at home (fights with siblings, defiance towards adults in the home), or at school with teachers or peers. You may notice a lack of motivation when it comes to school work, or a lack of interest at home with hobbies your child once enjoyed. If these concerns sounds familiar, you are not alone. In this time of change, loss and high-stress levels, many of these behaviors are not unusual. But what if you are concerned that your child is exhibiting these behaviors more often and with more intensity?

Your SPP Therapist can help! Reach out to your child's teacher and/or SPP therapist to let them know what your child is experiencing. We can provide strategies to help your child identify and work through the range of emotions they may be feeling. We are here to help students be the best versions of themselves. And, we are here for you, so please let us know whenever you have a concern!

## Teaching Social Skills at Home

- **Practice purposeful turn-taking with everyone in the home, i.e. picking the conversation topic, story to read, or game to play.**
- **Use movies, books and T.V. to sneak in an empathy lesson with your child based on the characters' actions.**
- **Make a point to have your child connect with others via pen pal, video chat, online games, etc. -- especially peers, if possible.**
- **Utilize board games or interactive play to teach problem solving, being a good sport, and communication.**

-Child Mind Institute, 2020

## MANAGING SCHEDULES AND BEHAVIORS

According to the Child Mind Institute, here are some tips and tricks to managing mental health challenges, changes in behaviors and schedules at home during this time:

1. **Set The Tone.** Practice modeling positive communication strategies and tone of voice with your child. During this time especially, you will be their biggest model of behavior.
2. **Focus On The Big Three: Diet/Nutrition, Activity and Sleep.** These three factors greatly impact both you and your child in ability to concentrate, problem solve, adjust to change, and use coping strategies. Try to a set bedtime routine, limit screen time and incorporate exercise and healthy meal options.
3. **Apologize.** If you do lose your cool, (which we all do at times) wait until the situation has calmed, then apologize to your child. Be open with what you were feeling (overwhelmed, frustrated, tired).
4. **Prioritize.** Determine what is realistic for you and your family to accomplish in one day. Set reasonable goals. If you don't know where to start, start with basic needs and make sure these are met first.
5. **Recharge.** Make it a point to set aside time in both your child's and your own schedule for activities you enjoy. Factor in a 15-minute walk, reading a chapter in a book, or time to exercise.
6. **Celebrate Successes.** No matter how small!
7. **Ask For Help.** Don't be afraid to ask for help. This is a challenging time, and extra support does not mean you have failed.